

Although no one in her group had trouble with Chinese authorities, she said, "there were people with video cameras. . . . We wanted them to see the banner. But there was no harassment."

Marshall, who lives in Jeffersontown, was named president of the Older Women's League in March. It's a nationwide, not-for-profit organization that promotes health, housing and Social Security issues for women over the age of 50.

The appointment caps a career of distinguished service.

For nearly 20 years until it closed in 1988, Marshall was executive director of Louisville's Opportunities Industrialization Centers Inc., once a nationwide non-profit group with headquarters in Philadelphia that trained welfare recipients for jobs.

She was also the first chairman of the Kentucky Minority AIDS Council.

Sam Robinson, president of the Lincoln Foundation and also a founding member of the AIDS council, recalled suggesting Marshall to the group because of her work with the National Council of Negro Women and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. "And when we were ready to elect officers, everybody looked to her for leadership," Robinson said.

Lead she has, also serving stints as a Presbyterian Church organizer, propagating racial fairness among Southern members during the 1960s and '70s; as director of Senior Services Inc. in Louisville; as past president of the National Council of Negro Women's Louisville section; and as the first African-American woman to chair the March of Dimes' Kentuckiana chapter, among other posts.

Last month in China, Marshall led a 32-member delegation to the Non-governmental Organizations Forum on Women in Huairou. It was an unofficial gathering held in conjunction with the U.N. conference in Beijing.

Marshall and her group, co-sponsored by the American Society on Aging, met officials of the China National Committee on Aging and China Research Center on Aging and toured hospitals and welfare homes for the elderly. It was an effort to promote concerns of older women that past world forums had inadequately addressed, Marshall said.

For example, women over 65 are disproportionately poor, spend more on home repairs, more frequently develop breast cancer and suffer more chronic ailments than older men, according to an Older Women's League study done in 1993.

The study also showed 60 percent of married women are widowed and living alone by 75, and 30 percent require home care, double the percentage for men.

"Back in the civil-rights days, women were suffering, and there have been some improvements, but not enough," Marshall said. "Women can work side by side with men, and maybe have better skills, but men get more pay. And if you happen to be an older woman, you are counted out completely."

Marshall clearly would not be counted out. Leading the local Opportunities Industrialization Center, she smashed the gender barrier in the early 1980s to head the group's executive directors association, a male-dominated network of about 85 OIC insiders.

"For Johnetta to run for that position, and win it, was akin to Shannon Faulkner entering The Citadel," said Gene Blue, president of the Phoenix, Ariz., OIC. "She became a spokes-person who accompanied the founder, Dr. Leon Sullivan, at congressional hearings. She had to overcome significant male egos to preside over all these dudes at meetings and workshops, which usually got loud and emotional."

Blue recalled one particular meeting, where "one of the most vociferous, a senior

executive from a major city, had the floor and was waxing eloquent. Finally Johnetta, without even raising her voice, said firmly, 'OK, that's enough. Sit down.' Now, it took most of us by surprise that she would tell this guy to shut up. But she did, and he sat down."

Marshall is widely known as a nurturer too. She grew up in Louisville's Limerick neighborhood, daughter of concrete finisher John Marshall who died when she was 10, and Emma Marshall, who supported the family with domestic work. Marshall had wanted to be a surgeon, but being black and female in the segregated 1930s and '40s, it was difficult to aspire to so lofty a vocation.

A divorcee, she raised six children on her own, has four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. The fruits of her labors are plentiful among her children: Samuel is a San Francisco stockbroker; Charles, a geriatric doctor in Los Angeles; and John, a supervisor of correctional officers in Los Angeles County. Glenna is a Louisville graphic artist; Marilyn, a bookkeeper in Atlanta; and Jo, a computer systems engineer in Louisville.

Marshall also served as a role model for scores of other people's children at the Presbyterian Community Center at 760 S. Hancock St.

"She'd ask questions like, 'How are you doing at home? How are you doing at school?'" said Ernest "Camp" Edwards, 63, an associate executive presbyter for the Presbytery of Louisville. "I was sort of mischievous, throwing stuff on the floor and blaming somebody else, so she always preached that I should be accountable for my own behavior and not blame others."

"That really stuck with me over the years," Edwards said. "She has a kind of presence and talks to you so that it makes a difference. I'm a social worker by profession, and, because of her, I decided to work with people. She was a 'significant other,' and I decided I could be a significant other."

Charles Hammond, the 52-year-old mayor of Fairfield, Calif., first met Marshall at the community center when he was 14. It was "where we virtually lived after we got out of school, and she was one of our youth directors. They basically kicked our behinds and kept us in line. We'd have our dances and she'd give us rules—no cursing, no smoking, treat the ladies like ladies * * * But she always had time for us. There was never a question that went unanswered. And that's what we admired about her. Seven days a week, any time you looked around, there she was, just like our mothers."

JOHNETTA MARSHALL'S ADVICE FOR SINGLE MOMS

Johnetta Marshall successfully raised six children along. Some now have families of their own, and all pursue rewarding careers.

"It wasn't easy then," said Marshall, "and even though women have more advantages now, it is lots more difficult."

She offered this advice for today's single mothers: "Recognize that you are only one person, that you can never be a mother and a father. Just be the best role model you can."

"As the mother, you instill in your children some ideals by the way you live. Always be honest and frank with the children. Don't let them think you can give them the moon when you can only give them a piece of the earth."

"And don't give up. You can do it."

ABOUT THE OLDER WOMEN'S LEAGUE

Founded in 1980, the Washington, D.C.-based Older Women's League promotes issues of health care, Social Security and housing for women over 50.

There are 20,000 members nationwide and chapters in every state.

Annual dues start at \$15; sterling, silver and platinum memberships also are available. ●

NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH WEEK

●Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, in honor of National School Lunch Week I want to talk about one of the great public policy success stories of this century—the National School Lunch Program. Passed by Congress and established by President Truman in 1946, this program by law has the mission "to safeguard the health and well-being of the Nation's children." By fighting hunger and promoting good nutrition among children, we can help them grow and mature into healthy, productive adults.

The program has been a resounding success in meeting this mission. Any parent or teacher can tell you that a hungry child cannot learn. More and more scientific evidence has made it clear that hunger and malnutrition can undermine a child's progress in school. Hunger remains a serious problem in this country, and school meals are an important part of the effort to fight it.

Today, the National School Lunch Program serves over 25 million students in 92,000 schools across the country. More than 90 percent of all public schools participate in the program. For almost 50 years, it has provided complete and nourishing meals to children, nearly half of them from low-income families. The school lunch program has reduced malnutrition and improved the health and well-being of children.

Since 1946, we have learned a great deal about the relationship between diet and health. We have learned that it is not enough to provide children with calories. They need the right kinds of food to keep them healthy. Too much fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium can increase the risk of heart disease and some forms of cancer. Low-income and minority groups are at greatest risk for those problems. Those risks begin in childhood. Good eating habits established in childhood are critical to staying healthy throughout one's life. I am very proud of the bipartisan legislation we passed last year to improve the nutritional content of school meals.

Mr. President, let me sum up by reiterating how important these programs have been, and how important they are today. Just as they were 50 years ago, school meals remain a critical part of this country's effort to promote our most precious resource—the health and well-being of our children. We have worked hard to build a program that is ready to meet its statutory health mission well into the 21st century. As we consider proposals to block-grant or cut these programs, let us not forget how successful they have been in the past and how important it is to maintain them at the Federal level to fulfill our national responsibility to fight hunger and promote good nutrition. ●